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# SERVICE

## USDA'S REPORT TO CONSUMERS

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE · OFFICE OF INFORMATION · WASHINGTON, D.C. 20250

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No. 6

Meet USDA At The Fair. The first fair for consumers by the U.S. Department of Agriculture drew nearly 14,000 visitors during its first 10 days. They came to pick up ideas on subjects that ranged from food to fabrics, from lawns to laundry, from shopping tips to camping trips. Countless others received consumer information from the fair through press, radio, and television. This was the whole reason for this "report to consumers" fair--to enable consumers to make better use of USDA services and safeguards.

First Lady Mrs. Lyndon B. Johnson officially opened the Fair. Introduced by Secretary Orville L. Freeman, Mrs. Johnson and other honored guests were then escorted on a preview tour of the many colorful exhibits and demonstrations.

Highlight of the Fair's second day was Secretary Freeman's "Report to Consumers from USDA," and a panel discussion on "What the Consumer Wants to Know." Secretary Freeman explained that "while abundance of food at bargain prices is USDA's most obvious service, the Department also serves consumers in dozens of less apparent ways. The Department of Agriculture provides 50 different services--more than any other Federal agency."

Panel members were Mrs. Esther Peterson, Special Presidential Assistant for Consumer Affairs and Assistant Secretary of Labor; Mrs. John G. Lee, Chairman of the President's Consumer Advisory Council; Michael J. O'Connor, Executive Director of the Super Market Institute; and George L. Mehren, Assistant Secretary of Agriculture.

Mrs. Peterson called for a continuing program of consumer education of national scope. She urged establishment of information centers throughout the United States to help people shop more wisely. Mrs. Lee explained the origin and goals of the Consumer Advisory Council, pointing out the consumer's right to be informed is high on the priority list of the Committee and Council.

Mr. O'Connor explained the five basic ways through which the food industry seeks to serve the consumer--quality food, supply, convenience, interest, and price. Assistant Secretary Mehren explained the long-standing cooperative effort in which USDA works with farmers and with the food industries to serve the consumers.



## NEW PUBLICATIONS

New Consumer Guide Tells All. Summarizing for the first time in one booklet all the U.S. Department of Agriculture's many consumer services and safeguards, the just-published "A Consumer's Guide to USDA Services" will be an invaluable reference book for homemakers and husbands, club program planners, educators, and industry leaders. Easy-to-read, it gives quick answers, then lists other USDA booklets available for details. It gives money-saving grocery shopping tips, for example, then suggests 10 other booklets for additional helpful facts. Single copies of the 50-page illustrated pocket book will be available to visitors at USDA's Food and Home Fair for Consumers in Washington April 14-30, or send postcard for "A Consumer's Guide to USDA Services--MP-959" to Office of Information, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250.

## HOUSEHOLD PESTS

Termites or Ants? Wings and Waists Tell. It's that time of year when flying, ant-like insects around the house can give you termite jitters. But they may be relatively harmless flying ants. Trap one and look at his wings and waist line. Does it have two pairs of transparent wings unequal in size? Is the waist pinched in and thin? Then it's a flying ant, say USDA experts. For details on preventing termites, and ways to control them once they're there, send post card for "Subterranean Termites: Their Prevention and Control in Buildings--G-64" to Office of Information, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250.

## PESTICIDE SAFETY

USDA Holds Hearings on Three Pesticides. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has held three hearings to determine whether registration of the chemical pesticides endrin, aldrin, and dieldrin should be cancelled or modified. At the hearings, witnesses from Federal and State governments and private organizations presented statements on research and use of these pesticides. The three chemicals have figured in recent press reports regarding extensive damage to fish in the lower Mississippi River. USDA registers pesticides sold in interstate commerce on the basis of their safety and effectiveness for prescribed uses.

Greater Pesticide Protection. New Federal regulations require manufacturers to place warning statements prominently on the front panels of pesticide labels so users can easily read them. The U.S. Department of Agriculture, which administers the regulations, says label warnings must now include the statement KEEP OUT OF REACH OF CHILDREN, or equivalent wording. They must also include "signal" words such as DANGER, CAUTION, or WARNING to draw your attention to your need to handle the material carefully. Now USDA may require additional toxicity information from manufacturers. And information on the product's safety and effectiveness obtained during field tests must now be reported regularly to USDA. Extensive safety data must still be submitted before USDA issues temporary shipping permits for experimental compounds being field tested.

## PLANTS

Baby Those Bulbs For Better Blooms. After the flowers on your flowering bulbs fade, cut them off to prevent seed formation which steals food from the bulbs. But USDA experts suggest you resist the urge to cut down the leaves after blooming time. Just let them die naturally because the green leaves build next year's bulbs.



Don't Buy Seed By Price Alone. Buying seed? Let quality be the judge, not just price. It's better to compare qualities--as shown on seed package labels because the label is your guide. The Federal Seed Act, administered by U.S. Department of Agriculture, requires that the label on seeds shipped across state lines show percentage of each kind of seed present, germination rate so you'll know how much seed should come up, germination test date, percentage of pure seed, noxious weed seeds, and origin. It pays to read that label.

Too Much For Your Lawn. Your enthusiasm for a good lawn can actually do more harm than good, USDA plant experts say. If you apply concentrated inorganic fertilizers too heavily, you'll actually burn the grass in two or three days. Burned areas may appear in spots or streaks, or you may see a brown look on your entire yard. To prevent injury, apply the fertilizer evenly in recommended amounts when the grass is dry, then water immediately. If your lawn is burned, water generously to wash off excess fertilizer and reduce injury. Ground agricultural limestone is safer for lawns than hydrated lime. To find how much to apply, have your soil tested.

#### SMART SHOPPERS

Here's How To Judge Freezer Cost. Pondering whether a home freezer would be a good buy for your family? USDA food economists say the cost of owning and operating a home freezer depends on five factors. If you fill it up, then only slowly nibble away at your loot, the cost per package of food is higher than it would be if you filled it, ate it empty, and filled it again during the same period. Other cost factors are the electricity used, the cost of packaging papers and containers, the repairs, and the original cost.

Shop Around For Credit. You'll be money ahead if you take the time to examine all your credit and installment buying possibilities carefully before you buy or borrow, USDA family economists say. After all, consumer credit is a service with a price. You compare prices of other services you buy--so why not compare credit prices? Rates vary considerably. Instead of buying on an installment plan, you may find it's possible to borrow money at a credit union, bank, or elsewhere at cheaper rates.

Stock Up On Steak For Cookouts. You can take advantage of today's beef prices to stock up for summer cookouts. Steak prices are traditionally higher in the summer. Properly handled steaks can be stored as long as 8 to 12 months at zero degrees, USDA food specialists say. When you choose steaks for freezing, select only high-quality fresh meat such as USDA Choice-grade. Freezing does not improve quality. When packaging meat for freezing, package in the quantities you'll cook at one time. If two steaks are to be wrapped together, place a double thickness of freezer paper between them so you can separate easily. Wrap food well or it will dry out. Freeze meat quickly at zero degrees or below.

Tricks To Cut Food Costs. Impulse buying can wreck your food budget. So head for the store armed with your trusty shopping list. USDA food economists also suggest you check weekly specials in the food store advertisements. Buy foods in plentiful supply because they're usually good buys. To find the best buy among different size containers of the same food, compare costs of an ounce or a pound. For example, ready-to-serve cereals in multi-packs of small boxes cost two or three times more per ounce than the same cereal in a larger box.

May Plentiful Foods. Foods likely to be good buys during May include beef, turkey, salad dressings and oils, canned ripe olives, and dairy products. You benefit when there's a bumper crop--food is top quality and the abundant supply often prompts special sales. It's the time to fill your pantry shelves or freezer.

## RECREATION

Here's Help With Community Recreation. If there's a growing demand for more outdoor recreation in your community, civic-minded groups could help meet the need by developing lakes, picnic areas, marinas and campgrounds as they carry out small watershed projects. Non-profit groups can get technical help and long-term loans for such projects through the U.S. Department of Agriculture. For details, send post card for "Recreation in Small Watershed Projects--A Program for Rural Areas Development--PA-610" to Office of Information, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250.

## EDUCATION

50 Years of Service. USDA's Cooperative Extension Service will complete 50 years of service to American consumers on May 8, 1964. Over the years, it has helped farm and urban families with best use of home produced goods; with selection, care and use of foods, clothing, equipment, housing--even credit, insurance, and savings. Consumer information is increasingly available to everyone through County Extension Offices in almost all 3,150 counties in the U.S. For a 50th Anniversary Fact Sheet, showing present broad range of educational assistance, send post card to "50th Anniversary", Federal Extension Service, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250.

Know Your County Home Economics Extension Agent. For consumer help tailored to your local area, don't overlook your County Home Economics Extension Agent. She's there to help homemakers, local groups, and community leaders take advantage of the services and research from the State land-grant college and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. She can give you good ideas for club programs, supply informational booklets, or answer specific questions. Maybe your club can even plan to attend some of the home-making short courses. To call, look under "County Government Office" in your telephone book. In most counties her office is in the court house or post office in your county seat town.

## COMMUNITY HELPS

USDA Rushes Help to Quake-Hit Alaska. Nearly 17 tons of USDA-donated foods have been shipped from Seattle to Alaska for emergency feeding of earthquake disaster victims in two native villages. Ample stocks still remain for additional emergency shipments. USDA worked with State agencies to set up as quickly as possible direct distribution of surplus food. It pledged help to meet food needs in the long hard period of rehabilitation ahead. A USDA task force is mobilizing the Department to help in other ways.

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SERVICE is a monthly newsletter of consumer interest. It is designed for those who report to the individual consumer, rather than for mass distribution. For more information about items appearing in this publication, write to the Editor, SERVICE, Office of Information, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250.